

Luke 12

Written by K B Napier
Wednesday, 19 April 2017 11:25

Perhaps the import of the text is not immediately apparent, but when re-reading the events surrounding the earthly end of Jesus, I am struck by the intensity and deepest woes of His words. If only Christians today saw the same thing! What a difference it would make!

Verses 1-4

1.

In the mean time, when there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, he began to say unto his disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.

2.

For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; neither hid, that shall not be known.

3.

Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.

4.

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.

Jesus was now in a very dangerous position, being bombarded by hyper-critical and ungodly demands from Pharisees and other Sanhedrin officials. They were turning the public attitude towards Jesus, from affection and awe, to dissatisfaction and doubt. It could end in only one way, and that end was coming very fast. Today, wicked men are doing the same to Christians, causing the public to hate us.

As Jesus was talking to and condemning the sub-strata known as the lawyers, a vast crowd was continuing to gather around Him, so vast as to be beyond numbering. They were like an uncontrolled football crowd, stepping on each other and jostling.

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Jesus ignored this and instead warned His disciples: “*Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.*” Time and again I have been told that it is sinful to highlight the errors of heretics. Perhaps you might not realise it, but this is a modern form of socialism, where no-one is ever criticised. Yet, Jesus had no problem being critical **in public** of the backstabbers and unbelievers of His day! The Pharisees in particular, though relatively new on the scene as a religious group, had a stranglehold on society, so Jesus had to make His followers aware of their tactics.

He told them to be ‘aware’. This word does not just mean to have a scant knowledge, but to make sure one is taught in something in order to understand it. When I became a Christian, I said that as a church we ought to have knowledge of our spiritual enemies, but was quickly ‘put down’ by the deacons. They assured me that God will take care of that! Today, I see the full impact of their folly, as unimaginable horrors have displaced God in society, cults rule the church scene, and government adheres to socialism and godless evils. Jesus said it; so I say it!

What does Jesus mean by ‘leaven’? In the ordinary sense it refers to a substance put into bread to make it rise. This is the sense found in the Old Testament. But, in the New Testament metaphorical sense it refers to infecting God’s people with moral and mental corruption. Leaven is very small in amount but it spreads throughout the dough affecting all of it (e.g. Matthew 13:33). In the New Testament leaven can be used for good as well as bad, but in this text Jesus uses it to point out the bad; leaven in the text speaks of the evil spoken and taught by the Pharisees in the guise of godliness, corrupting the people.

Not only is the leaven of the Pharisees said to be bad in essence, but it also makes the Pharisees hypocrites. Hypocrisy does NOT mean making a genuine mistake: it means to play-act in order to get one’s own way. Jesus alluded to this earlier. The Pharisees dictated what was required, but did not follow the same rules they applied to others. Rather, they acted in a two-faced manner to get obedience. This is what made them hypocrites. In our modern day politicians make laws they expect everyone to obey, but yet ignore them in their own lives. The scriptural word is rooted in *hypocritinomai*, meaning to feign, to pretend, to impersonate. In this way the Pharisees hid their true aims.

Jesus thus warns the disciples (verse 2) to beware of their hidden agenda, which would soon be uncovered and made obvious. Even if lies are hidden today, God will reveal them at the end of time. The Pharisees were plotting against Jesus, but He did not mention this to the disciples

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directly. He was saying that their machinations would become transparent very soon; they devised their evils secretly in dark rooms and in hidden corners, but God would highlight them. The arrest and killing of Jesus was a full revelation of the wickedness of the Sanhedrin, so Jesus was right!

Though the Pharisees would kill Him, pretending they were doing God's will (also prophesied by Him), the disciples were not to be afraid of such men, whose sphere of influence finished when the person was killed. Once the person was killed unrighteously, the killers could do no more to him. Of course, Jesus is illustrating His comment with the worse scenario. It covers everything thrown at us by unbelievers, including scorn, derision, loss, and even killing.

Verses 5-12

1.

But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.

2.

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

3.

But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.

4.

Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God:

5.

But he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.

6.

And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but unto

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him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.

7.

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

8.

For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.

Jesus expands on what He said – don't fear those who simply kill your body, but fear him who can send your soul to hell. Now, obviously, if you know someone is going to kill you, you will be afraid. But, Jesus is not focusing on that. The locus of His attention is on entering hell. If a man is killed but is saved, then he will go to Heaven. If he is killed but is unsaved, then he will NOT go to Heaven, but to hell. So, who is the "him" and "he" in verse 5?... this is the person we should fear.

The word 'hell' in this text is a translation of the word Gehenna/Ge-Hinnom (Gehenna of fire). This is reference to the Hinnom valley/valley of Tophet, near Jerusalem. Inhabitants took their rubbish and dead animals there to be burned; hence it was used as a description of hell and its destructive power... a place where the body is destroyed continuously but does not get consumed. That is, the person experiences dire consequences of being unsaved, with unquenchable pain. Whether this is only mental or also bodily, we do not know.

Bearing in mind that Jesus uses the term 'hell' and it is He Who warns against the one who can send us to hell, we should understand that hell is a very real place and its torments are also very real. That some call out in derision, saying that no loving God would send anyone to endless torment, is irrelevant, for Jesus Himself says it is true! Human unbelief does not remove or alter God's truth. Jesus, then, says we must 'fear' this person – meaning to be terrified of him. In verse 5 this person is only identified as 'this' person, *touton*. Who is he?

Some argue that he must be Satan, but there is a great flaw in saying so. Satan can tempt us to sin, but he can't make us sin. Likewise, he can lead us blindly into sin to the day we die, but he

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cannot force us to reject God. Only our own sin can do that. After that comes God's retribution on Judgment Day, when He sends us to hell. Satan does not have the authority to do so. Therefore 'he' is God. It is God we should be mightily afraid of if we reject the Gospel; it is He who then sends us to hell.

Never blame anyone else for your spiritual condition; never blame Satan for 'causing' you to sin or to reject Christ, for he cannot do that. And do not blame God for your condition, either, for you sin of your own accord. I will repeat Christ's warning:

"I say unto you, Fear him".

Time and again I hear Christian preachers assuring their hearers that 'fearing' God does not mean actual fear but simply reverence. This does not fit the text or the word! The word can mean to revere, but with the reverence comes absolute fear of what God can do. Thus, as Jesus implies here, this fear is a quaking, trembling fear that sends us flying to the Lord in repentance, lest we fall. Once we have repented and He has forgiven us, the fear is removed... but the fear should always be there, in our hearts and minds, as a reminder of our *adopted* positions.

Continuing the theme of relying on God and not being afraid of wicked men, Jesus adds that none of us is forgotten by God. That is, 'us' being the saved. God knows every feather on a tiny sparrow sold in the market; they were sold cheaply, five of them costing just two farthings. Yet, God knew everything about them. In this text 'sparrow' can mean any small bird. A farthing was an *assarius*, which is one-tenth of a drachma, or, one-sixteenth of a Roman denarius.

In Jesus' day, a carpenter was paid five denarii an hour. So the cost of five sparrows was worth just a few minutes work. Jesus was assuring the disciples that if God knows even the sparrows, He will certainly know the condition and fate of His chosen children.

God knows every hair on our heads, even when they diminish in number as mine do! But, we are far more valuable to God than sparrows and we should not be afraid of anyone or anything, if we are saved. Many slump in fear or depression because of a variety of circumstances, but Jesus is saying we should not be this way: God is aware of our lives and what happens to us. If we obey Him and have faith, He will look after us!

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Jesus goes on to an allied topic: If, though attacked or persecuted, we confess God, then God will confess us “before the angels”. No single Christian is so lowly as to be forgotten or below value! Each one of us, even those who fall into sin regularly, is highly valued, so valued that God speaks well of us before the angels in Heaven.

To “confess”, *homologeō*, is to be as one with Christ, to assent to everything He says, does and commands, and not to deny Him. These things must be done openly. As a reward, Christ openly supports and blesses us. But, if a man denies Christ (does not agree with Him or accept His words) then Christ will deny him in Heaven, saying “I never knew you”!

In fact, God will forgive anyone who speaks badly of Christ (if he repents), but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost will not be forgiven. What does this mean? This is the ‘unforgiveable sin’. To blaspheme is to speak evil of God/Holy Spirit, and to ‘rail’ against Him and to thus reject Christ. By extension, it also applies to speaking sinfully of God’s actions and words. As it is the Holy Spirit Who presents the truth of the Gospel to us, if we reject the Gospel we reject the Holy Spirit *and* the Christ, Who is represented here by the Spirit, the very ‘connection’ between man and God.

Next, Jesus advises them what to do when they are paraded before the magistrates. In saying this, He is warning them that their faith will have a price and to *expect* persecution. The same warning applies today. Those who hate God will drag us before the people, whether in churches or in civil courts. We see this happening today, everywhere. Do not panic, He tells them! Don’t worry about devising clever words to get yourself out of trouble! Just relax in God and He will teach you exactly what to say (verse 12). This can be done ‘on the spot’, so forget about writing clever retorts and excuses to avoid being hurt. Let the Spirit lead.

Verses 13-15

1.

And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me.

2.

And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?

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3.

And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

Verse 13 is a sudden change of topic, so we may assume that Luke has omitted certain discussions in between. One of the crowd asks Christ to mediate in a dispute. But, Jesus waves it aside as being nothing to do with His mission to earth. In my own ministry, some try to divert me from what I should be doing by concentrating on minor issues, or issues that are not relevant to what I am saying or doing. Over time I have learnt to shrug these off, otherwise I would spend all my days just rebutting such irritations!

The man asked Jesus to settle a dispute with his brother over their inheritance. The man wanted his share! Jesus replied that He did not come to be a judge over civil matters, but, rather, warned the man about falling to a covetous nature (a desire to have more, a love of money). To be covetous is to live by human rules of greed. No man should measure his life by what he has. And if some cheat us out of our inheritance we should not become angry and fight for it.

The tenor of this is that our aims should be Heaven-ward and not pocket-filled! God will deal with those who defraud us, and we must keep our hearts and minds in good order. Of course, this does not mean Christ had nothing to say about such a cheating relationship. It is just that at this time He had far greater things to think about. We can certainly take someone to task for cheating us, but we should not let it damage our souls.

Verses 16-21

1.

And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

2.

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

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3.

And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

4.

And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.

5.

But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?

6.

So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Jesus again uses a parable to teach a lesson. A landowner's field produced excellent crops which grew in abundance. There were so many crops that he ran out of room to store them. He decided to pull down his old, smaller barns to build bigger, newer ones. But, his new riches caused him to take a rest and to take it easy, eating, drinking and being merry. Thus, he wasted both his money and his efforts. Many Christians today who have extra, start to buy expensive things they do not need and live richer lifestyles. But, this does not impress the Lord!

While the man takes his ease (which suggests forgetting God in some way), God warns him *"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee!"*

In the midst of his good-times the man would be cut down by God and would die. He had forgotten his relationship with God, putting his trust and enjoyment in what he believed he had earned. God sees it otherwise – whatever we have belongs to Him, and we may not forsake working for the Lord. As Jesus said, 'what then?'. You gain so much, but then you die suddenly; what use is your wealth and goods then? Such a man is only rich in human terms, but is poor in the things of God.

Verses 22-27

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1.

And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.

2.

The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

3.

Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?

4.

And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit?

5.

If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?

6.

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Jesus, knowing He was soon to be taken from the disciples, gave them more counsel, about what to do when He was not with them. They were not to worry about how they would live, whether they worked full time for the Lord or just lived a simple, believing life.

Jesus added to His words about the barn-building landowner... Do not worry about what you will have to eat, drink and clothe you, and do not plead continually with God for them. God knows that life is far more than what we eat, drink and wear. The ravens just fly around; they do not

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work, worry, or store their food 'just in case', yet they are fed by God's provision. We are far more important to God than sparrows or ravens! So, He will feed and clothe us. He will give us our needs (not our often unworthy wants).

As for anxiety, who can change his height by worrying about it? Indeed, worry cannot change one little thing in our lives! It only makes us feel ill and depressed, giving misery to our families. Jesus asks us why we bother to worry, when God takes care of us in the smallest of things as well as the biggest.

The birds live without worry; the lilies of the field also grow without worry or activity. It is designed into them to grow, whether they 'think' about it or not! In the same way, God has given to us His promise to look after us – it is part of our inheritance as a child of God. The beauty of the lilies was greater than the beauty of Solomon in his finery. The same goes for us, today, who belong to God.

Verses 28-31

1.

If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?

2.

And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

3.

For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.

4.

But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you.

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Jesus concludes his counsel by saying that if God so cares for the lowliest plants, which only last a few short days, He will surely look after His people. He admonished the disciples – “*O ye of little faith*”

. When we have little faith, the things of God are not affected, but our hearts, minds and emotions
are

! As the saying goes, we ‘worry ourselves into the ground’. If we are faithful to the Lord, we will have His support and help, whether we have a business, work for others, are slaves, or are unemployed. With true faith, even the smallest amount, we will flourish in God’s eyes, will know great peace, and will not be anxious. For Christians, assurance and support are built-in to our saved characters! Do not be anxious.

God will feed and clothe us, if only basically, with ‘no frills’. We must not doubt this will happen, for doubt is a killer of faith and a breeder of anxiety. The unsaved world strives to satisfy these basic needs, often destroying the means to have them because of greed and violence. But, God KNOWS what we need, and provides it, because they are foundational to an earthly life. There is no need to keep pestering Him for them! He gives them to His children anyway.

More importantly, we must leave our daily needs to God, which gives us freedom to “*seek the kingdom of God*”.

When we do this, God will give us everything we need. This seeking is not for salvation, for we already have this. What we seek is the way of life that should accompany salvation.

To ‘seek’, is to look diligently for something; to meditate on it; to run after it because of its importance. The kingdom of God is His spiritual presence on this earth, which continues into the next world, the world of Heaven and God. It means to live this life as if it were already in Heaven. Thus, we can bypass the earthly woes and evils created by sinful, wicked men and live as saved beings already with one foot in Heaven.

When we live like this, without anxiety and relying only on the Lord, He gives us what we require in life. He already knows what we need before we know it ourselves. In fact, He knows in eternity, and knew our path and life before we were born. We are in His loving hands before we enter this world and after we leave it. Just live for the Lord, and all will be given to us as a gift.

Verses 32-34

1.

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Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

2.

Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.

3.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

In the last section we saw that we should seek God's will first, and then He will give us everything we actually need in this life. Jesus follows this up with an assurance: "*Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*"

There is no need to be anxious about whether or not you are saved, if you have been born again, repented and been saved. It is our Father's

"good pleasure"

to give you your salvation! The elect are predestinated to be saved!

Many Christians have this anxiety, but not in the sense Jesus speaks of it here. He refers to people who are intensely terrified of not being saved. No saved man or woman can feel this way; they might have fleeting doubts because they are aware of their sin, but they should not have an overwhelming fear, *phobeō*.

Note that I used the word 'should'. If a Christian becomes very lax and does things he should not, or does not continue to walk in the path of righteousness, then Satan can come to him with great temptations to sin. If he listens and falls to sin, then this may be followed by a terrible picture of himself entering hell. This can only arise as terrifying because he knows his soul is damaged by the sin. Normally, then, if we are faithful, these terrors will not arise.

Jesus was talking to His ardent followers; many followed Him, to be healed or to listen... in many ways He was the 'celebrity' of His day who attracted followers in much the same way as human TV 'stars' are followed on the screen! They had no TV or films or stadiums... so they had to meet the latest 'star' in person.

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But, amongst these many thousands were the few who decided to be His disciples. They decided to follow urgently because they had already been chosen in eternity to do so. These Jesus called His “*little flock*”, because the core of true followers was very small in number at that time. ‘Flock’, ***poimnion***, is a word used to describe sheep, but can also refer to a group of Christ’s followers, or to a group of churches served by elders (pastors). In no way does its connotation of ‘sheep’ imply that Christ’s followers blindly follow the shepherd.

It is God’s “*good pleasure*” to give us the kingdom. In the Greek, “*good pleasure*” is one word, ***eudoke***

ō

. It includes the idea of God choosing to do good to people, willingly. It also means to prefer to do so. In this we again see the eternal truth of predestination, which is further described by the words

“*to give*”,

didōmi

. That is, God gave us salvation because He wished and chose to do so – we cannot choose to have it of our own accord, because it is a gift. The meaning includes the idea of granting to someone, to bestow a gift on someone who belongs to Him.

And what God gives freely as a gift is His “*kingdom*”. The word used in this text for “*kingdom*” should not be confused with an earthly kingdom. In this text

basileia

is reference to God’s heavenly kingdom; that is Christ’s authority and right to rule over His spiritual domain. The same authority is also given to believers, because the reign of the Messiah is theirs by God’s right. So, Christians should not fear the world, when their Father has given them the right to enter Heaven freely, without any action on their part to deserve it.

With such an assurance we do not need to be anchored on this earth. Thus, Jesus counselled the disciples not to hold onto the things of this world. “*Sell that ye have!*” Can you imagine what YOU would think, in your heart, if Jesus gave the same counsel to you? Would you be happy to do so? The word

”

have
has

a meaning of anything owned – property, wealth, goods. Another word is ‘substance’. Once sold, give the money to those who need it;

“*give alms*”.

Jesus would then sustain those who gave.

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Many give money to charities. But how much of this is genuinely out of mercy or pity? And what charities receive the money? Are they suitable for Christian benefaction? Most causes are not suitable! As I have said many times before, if your immediate family is in need, then give to them (this is not an excuse to ONLY give to immediate family by hoarding cash or goods, etc., for ones' self) . After that comes the needs of fellow believers (NOT to 'the church' as a whole), no matter where they are.

'Charity' does not necessarily mean an organised group, but should really mean individuals you know of, who need help. All of this is connected to the basis for 'alms' – righteousness. We must help and give, not to *become* righteous, but as an act of righteousness we already have. Such helps are then called 'almsdeeds'... which are performed quietly, without fuss or publicity.

Jesus then adds that the disciples should acquire bags for themselves that will not wear out. Specifically, this refers to a purse or money-bag. (You may remember that amongst the apostles, Judas was the keeper of the money bag). Another possible meaning is a money-belt tied around the waist for security. Why say "*wax not old*"? It is my view (and therefore only an opinion) that Jesus was telling them not to tire of giving alms, or to see it as a burden, but to always keep the flame of charity alive in the heart... thus the money bag represented an ever-present attitude of giving.

When believers thus give freely (from what God has provided anyway), it is a "*treasure in the heavens*" witnessed by the Lord and commended with crowns. The money given in this world is as nothing to God, because it will eventually just rot away. But, the treasures of Heaven are eternal and of inestimable worth. On earth thieves can break into our home and steal, but not so in Heaven. And whatever treasures we accrue in Heaven will last forever, a continual testimony to God's approval and reward.

On this earth, we can tell what a man is truly like, by the way he handles his money and goods. For me, money is how I am enabled to live on this earth. What is it for you? Amusingly, whenever I have had more than I need to live on, it has been taken away! I have never, ever, been able to keep money. On occasions this has caused much distress, mainly because those I owe to have been very aggressive. However, money itself is not really my main desire. Perhaps this is because I am now 'conditioned' by God to think of it this way, I do not know!

Verses 35-38

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1.

Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning;

2.

And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.

3.

Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.

4.

And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

Jesus is advising his disciples to live in this life as those who are about to leave. It would be absurd to buy a house in a country one would never visit again. So, why put one's effort and heart into this world, which we will leave soon?

Instead, always be ready to leave. Not in a melodramatic or morbid way, but in a realistic sense. If you know a taxi is coming to pick you up, you will be dressed to go out, watching for its arrival. Likewise on this earth. We must be like people waiting for the master to come home after a wedding. It could be any time, so be ready; when he knocks, you will answer immediately and not be found sleeping. The servant who does so will be rewarded by the master, when he sits the master down and gives him a meal, even in the early hours. It does not matter when the master returns home – he will be more than pleased if his servants are ready and waiting, and will bless them with much. (Note: In scripture there were four watches in the night... evening [first watch; sunset to nine pm], midnight [second watch; 9 pm to midnight], roostercrow [third watch; midnight to 3 am], and Morning [fourth watch; 3 am to 6 am/sunrise]. Of course, the blessing really a reward founded on one's own character and purpose – the desire to please the master. This desire should not be shown just to get favour or rewards, but because one loves

the master.

Verses 39&40

1.

And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through.

2.

Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.

When we go to bed we sleep. This is why thieves break-in mainly at night. If the owner knew when a thief would break-in, he would be ready to tackle him by waiting and not sleeping. He could then scare the burglar away and not suffer loss. In the same way, says Jesus, be constantly ready! The Son of man' will likewise come at a time no-one expects, suddenly.

None of this means we do nothing but sit around waiting for the Second Coming! It means that whatever we are doing, we should be aware that Christ could return at any time, and so we are ready... morally, ethically, spiritually. It stands to reason that this means to live holy lives, rejecting sin, and being righteous. Are YOU ready?

I suppose the closest illustration for us is the lifeboat crew who busy themselves in their occupations, but drop everything as soon as they hear the alarm. Or, an ambulance crew or medic who immediately respond to distress calls. Or, a police officer who rushes to deal with an emergency call. Not only are these people ready to go, but they are suitably equipped to do so, and well-trained.

Every Christian should be well-trained. This begins with scripture and prayer, reinforced by meditation, study, spiritual experience and a righteous life. In other words, when the Lord returns, we will not be ashamed by what He finds in us. Jesus WILL come again and though we will all hear a trumpet call to herald His coming, He will come swiftly, when no-one expects it. Then, there will be no time to adjust our lives to *appear* to be holy! The Lord will never be fooled by that!

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Verses 41-48

1.

Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all?

2.

And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?

3.

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.

4.

Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.

5.

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken;

6.

The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers.

7.

And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.

8.

But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

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Written by K B Napier
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Peter always seemed to be one of the first to ask questions: he asks Jesus if what He said applied only to them, or to all believers in all of time. Jesus replied that it applied to whoever dealt well with his master and did him good service. Such a servant is a *“faithful and wise servant”* counted to be worthy of praise. In our case our worthiness is not because of what we do, but because of the Son Who is wholly righteous. Thus, if we act in a Christ-like manner we are worthy because of the Son.

The master of the house will make such a servant the ruler of the whole house, thus running the home for the good of the master, providing everything needed, including meals. Many Christians only do good when others watch. Jesus is talking about believers who do good even when no-one is watching or praising them, because such a person is a genuine servant and will deserve the reward of being made ruler of the master's house. Thus, the saying by Christ can apply generally to all believers, who should all act this way, and also specifically to all pastors and preachers, who must act with wisdom and rightness. As I know, we do not always live up to expectations of others, who can be very harsh if we 'trip up'. But, the Lord knows our innermost hearts, and He does not punish us for occasional errors of judgment.

But, look at what happens to the servant who thinks his master will not return for some time! He acts roughly, beating the other servants; he eats and drinks his master's food and wine, and becomes drunk. (Sadly, many Christians DO act this way, to their great shame). The master returns home suddenly and catches him in his drunken behaviour. The master will immediately throw the servant out of the house without a penny and will treat him like an unbeliever. This parable is an interesting one, for it shows us that Jesus is referring not to unbelievers but to believers who slide into sin, because they think God is not watching!

As a pastor and in my ministry I have had to deal with many of these people. Always, I urge them to repent immediately and to turn from their sin. There is never a case for them to delay repentance or turning from sin. It MUST be immediate, for the Master could return in the very next second. We KNOW Jesus is referring to believers because of His warning: that He will *“apoint him his portion with the unbelievers”*.

This means He will treat the person as an unbeliever – the worst possible judgment on anyone, to lose the favour of God.

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Another proof that Jesus speaks of believers is verse 47: the servant KNEW the Master's will and did not do it. He let His guard down and sinned badly, not bothering to watch to see if his Master was coming. If we are always ready, then we will act according to His will. But, he sinned, and the Master beat him with many stripes. For the servant of an household, this probably happened before he was thrown out. But, how can this apply to us as believers? It can be that the stripes are anything passed upon us because of deliberate sin... self-harm, bad relationships, desperate experiences and 'bad things happening'. They are judgments of God.

There are also godly servants who sin and do not really realise it, or who sin without the notion to sin perpetually. These (including you and me) are still worthy of judgment, but God will not send great punishment upon us. We will still know we have offended the Lord, but He will not burden us with gross punishments. Those who will suffer the most are those who (should) know the most, especially pastors and those ordained to act on behalf of God.

Verses 49-53

1.

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?

2.

But I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!

3.

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division:

4.

For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.

5.

The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.

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Verse 49 is interesting and seemingly mysterious, so what does it mean? Firstly, let us look at word meanings: “*I am come*” implies that this is why Jesus came, or at least a large part of the purpose. “*To send*”, *ballō*, means to throw into, to pour out, or to put into. Can also mean ‘to send peace’, but not in this text.

What Jesus ‘threw’ was fire, which has numerous possible meanings. The word can refer to physical fire, but here it refers to the fire or holiness of God. It is called ‘fire’ because it consumes everything in its path if it is unholy. The word also refers to trials of the saints, and the judgment of God on their results. The fire here also touches on God’s judgment upon those who reject Christ, or judgments belonging to the close of the age (that is, until the salvation of Christ overtook and replaced the sacrifices of the Jews). There are several other meanings for ‘fire’. The fire is “*on the (whole) earth*”.

“*What will I, thelo?*” This can be rephrased as ‘what is my desire?’ or ‘I take pleasure in’. “*If it be already kindled?*”

Or, if the fire is already lit and starting to burn. So, what does this verse really mean? It is further explained in verse 50. That is, Jesus brought the holiness and commands of God to the world as a whole; John the Baptist had started a flow of Jews towards the truth, and this overtakes anything about to happen to Jesus. The fire of evil started with the Pharisees, and it was Jesus’ desire that the infant fire should burn fiercely, so that prophecy could be accomplished – He must be killed for the sins of the world.

Jesus thus joined the previous statements to those that followed. The disciples must be ready for the final onslaught of the Pharisees which, though foul, was in the plan of salvation. Neither Pharisees nor Satan could escape their part in promoting the will of God in salvation! Jesus *had* to be ‘baptised’ with this ferocity. In verse 50, “a baptism” uses a different word from “to be baptised with”. The first word is the neuter noun,

baptisma

. The second is the verb,

baptizō

ō

. The first is the subject matter; the second is the action taken.

In the text the word baptism is used to imply a total immersion in the death that is to follow; to be overwhelmed by Satanic fury. Jesus HAD to endure this wicked murder. He had to be baptised horrifically so that He could give salvation; in this case ***baptizō*** underlines the idea of

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being overwhelmed. (All was in God's will).

Jesus adds that He was "*straitened*" by what was to come. **Synechō**, holds the meaning of holding everything fast together until the task is completed... nothing would stop Jesus accomplishing His plan.

Jesus then blows away the opposite plans made by men, even today. He said He did not come to bring peace! Today, men love 'peace' without substance (fakery), one founded not on truth but on man's desires. Jesus did not come for this! Rather, He came to bring division! Let that reverberate around the minds of modern 'Christians' who accuse us of hating peace. Jesus did not come to spread peace! The word 'peace' can have several possible interpretations, but the reference here is to tranquillity and personal harmony with others. Jesus specifically warns that He did not come for this, but to cause divisions, **diamerismos** – dissension and disunity.

This is anathema to modern Christians who love the idea of peace, but not the peace given by God, which automatically involves opposing everything that is ungodly, even within the churches. This implies parting asunder, an argumentative discussion and discord, this being the very opposite of 'peace'. The root, **diamerizō**, is much stronger – to cut in pieces, to cleave asunder, to redistribute allegiances so that two forces oppose each other. The over-arching 'unity' found in so many churches, whichever form of 'ecumenism' is adopted, is against God's will.

There can be no peace when godless ideas are embedded within the churches. They must be rooted-out. Most local churches are false entities containing not just believers and unbelievers, but also genuine believers and heretical believers. All must be cut asunder by the sword of truth. Unity at any cost is not the absolute aim of any local church or Christians. Unity is only possible in truth and love, and love is not true if it tolerates sin and teaching that is opposite to God's commands.

Thus, if we are charged with being divisive, when we insist on God's law instead of human inventions, it is a badge of honour! We may not cause dissension for the sake of it. But, we are duty-bound to oppose anything that God does not teach us, even if it splits a church into pieces. It is what Jesus came to do, and we are His followers.

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Jesus continues this theme by applying it not just to a local church but also to a family in one house. A family will certainly be divided and split apart by the Gospel! A few will be saved and will accept the teachings of the Lord, but the others will adamantly hate it, and so arguments and divisions will occur. This cannot be avoided, for Satan will make sure that those who are saved are opposed by the unsaved. Father and son will be at enmity, mother against daughter, mother-in-law against son-in-law... this is to be expected.

The ones in the wrong are the unsaved members. The ones who are saved must stand firm and respectful, but must never give in. In modern terms this might involve moving away from the family home, because faithfulness to Christ is greater than family unity. This kind of extreme problem may not arise fully in every family, but it must be kept in the mind as a possibility. Of course, the same principle also applies to churches and other groups... loyalty must always be to Christ, not to human agencies or individuals.

Verses 54-59

1.

And he said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is.

2.

And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass.

3.

Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?

4.

Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?

5.

When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.

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6.

I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite.

Jesus then turned to the crowd, appealing to natural phenomena they already knew. When they saw a cloud coming out of the west, they would know that rain was on the way. If they felt the south wind blowing, they knew the day would be hot. Yet, though all the signs of doom were upon the Jewish nation, they could not see what was happening! Their discernment was faulty. Higher things were beyond them, but lower things were easy to accept. The Jews were the keepers of God's law and commands, yet they seemed incapable of seeing what was under their very noses, including the falsity of the Pharisees and lawyers, and the wrong teachings of the scribes. The Messiah had come; He did many miracles and spoke powerfully – yet the people did not see Who He was or what His ministry was about. It was prophesied, yet they were blind, following blind leaders who abused scripture.

You will note that Jesus did not say they were *unable* to understand, or that they had no knowledge. No, they were deliberately unable – hence, hypocrites. Today, men who avoid truth and teach badly are interpreting wrongly. They are culpable. They are guilty before God, because they do not teach scripture as it is written. They use demonic versions of the Bible. They refuse to accept the most basic of teachings. Thus, they are willing hypocrites.

Jesus said they did not discern the times. To discern is to judge from given facts; to test the spirits; to examine the information properly to see if it is genuine. If it is not genuine, it is unworthy and must be cast aside as so much rubbish.

Jesus was extremely blunt with the Jewish leaders. They would not make proper godly judgments, but diverted truth so that their own false judgments applied, thus misdirecting the people, pretending they did not know what was right. In our own day, modern versions mainly arose from theologians Westcott and Hort. But, how many know that they deliberately twisted scripture and the original languages so as to undermine the KJAV? The evidences are in letters they sent and in their conversations and work. That is, they KNEW that their versions were corrupt, but wrote them anyway. The same was with the Pharisees.

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Jesus then went on to another topic – being taken before judges in court. Better, He said, to pacify the opponent than to go through the legal process. This is common sense, but flies in the face of one's pride! Lose the pride, Jesus said, and avoid the penalty. Come to an arrangement with the one who is wronged, so that he might stop the proceedings and accept an apology or some other acceptable alternative. I remember I had to do this, and what promised to be an expensive and ruinous judgment simply evaporated! Yes, my honour was severely dented, but the conclusion was perfect! (As an aside – no, I had done nothing to be guilty of, but the circumstances were stacked against me).

Fight all the way, just to be proved 'right', and it could go against you, said Jesus. You will end up in prison for a very long time, until you repay your debt. This is sound advice concerning almost all court proceedings that could affect Christians. It does not matter if you are 'right' or wrong... take the shortest route to defusing the situation. Let pride take a battering and stay unjudged! In my own case my adversary was in the wrong, but I did not have the cash or the means to fight my side. I either swallowed my pride, or lost because the other person had much money behind him and had already promised to win, even if it meant lying. Remember that God knows the truth about you and it is this that really matters. (Yes, there ARE caveats!).

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