

Parable of the Watchful Servant

Luke 12:50 But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished! 3

This refers to His **baptism** to the point of death on Calvary. 13

He was under tremendous constraint to go to the cross to accomplish redemption for lost mankind. 23

The shame, suffering, and death were the Father's will for Him, and He was anxious to obey.33

Luke 12:51 Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. :52 For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. :53 Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”3

He knew very well that His coming would not give **peace on earth** at that time. And so He warned the disciples that when men came to Him, their families would persecute them and drive them out. 13

The introduction of Christianity into an average home of **five** would split the family. 23

It is a curious mark of man's perverted nature that ungodly relatives would often rather have their son a drunkard and dissolute person than have him take a public stand as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ! 33

The Signs of the Times

Luke 12:54 Then He also said to the multitudes, “Whenever you see a cloud rising out of the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming’; and so it is. :55 And when you see the south wind blow, you say, ‘There will be hot weather’; and there is. 1

The previous verses were addressed to the disciples. Now the Savior turns **to the multitudes**. He reminds them of their skill in predicting the weather. They knew that when they saw **a cloud to the west** (over the Mediterranean), they were in for **a shower**. On the other hand, a **south wind** would bring scorching heat and drought. The people had the intelligence to know this. But there was more than intelligence. There was the will to know.1

Luke 12:56 Hypocrites! You can discern the face of the sky and of the earth, but how is it you do not discern this time? 3

In spiritual matters, it was a different story. Though they had normal human intelligence, they did not realize the important **time** which had arrived in human history. The Son of God had come to this earth, and was standing in their very midst. 13

Heaven had never come so near before. But they did not know the time of their visitation. 23

They had the intellectual capacity to know, but they did not have the will to know, and thus they were self-deluded.33

Luke 12:57 “Yes, and why, even of yourselves, do you not judge what is right? :58 When you go with your adversary to the magistrate, make every effort along the way to settle with him, lest he drag you to the judge, the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. :59 I tell you, you shall not depart from there till you have paid the very last mite.”

If they realized the significance of the day in which they lived, they would be in a hurry to make peace **with their adversary**.

Four legal terms are used here—**adversary, magistrate, judge, officer**—and they all may refer to God. At that time God was walking in and out among them, pleading with them, giving them an opportunity to be saved. They should repent and put their faith in Him. If they refused, they would have to stand before God as their Judge. The case would be sure to go against them. They would be found guilty and condemned for their unbelief. They would be thrown **into prison**, that is, eternal punishment. They would not come out **till** they had **paid the very last mite**—which means that they would *never* come out, because they would never be able to pay such a tremendous debt.

So Jesus was saying that they should discern the time in which they lived. Then they should get right with God by repenting of their sins and by committing themselves to Him in full surrender.

Turn Back to God

Luke 13:1 There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. :2 And Jesus answered and said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? :3 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.

Chapter 12 closed with the failure of the Jewish nation to discern the time in which they lived, and with the Lord’s warning to repent quickly or perish forever. Chapter 13 continues this general subject, and is largely addressed to Israel as a nation, although the principles apply to individual people.

Two national calamities form the basis of the resulting conversation. The first was the massacre of some **Galileans** who had come to Jerusalem to worship. **Pilate**, the governor of Judea, had ordered them to be slain while they were offering **sacrifices**. Nothing else is known concerning this atrocity. We assume the victims were Jews who had been living in Galilee. The Jews in Jerusalem might have been laboring under the delusion **that these Galileans** must have committed terrible sins, and that their death was an evidence of God’s disfavor. However, the Lord Jesus corrected this by warning the Jewish people that **unless** they repented, they would **all likewise perish**.

Luke 13:4 Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? :5 I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

The other tragedy concerned the collapse of a **tower in Siloam** which caused the death of **eighteen** persons. Nothing else is known about this accident except what is recorded here. The point emphasized by the Lord was that this catastrophe should not be interpreted as a special judgment for gross wickedness. Rather, it should be seen as a warning to all the nation of Israel that **unless** they repented, a similar doom would come upon them. This doom came to pass in A.D. 70 when Titus invaded Jerusalem.

A Story About a Fig Tree

Luke 13:6 He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. :7 Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ :8 But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. :9 And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’ ” 5

It is not difficult to identify the **fig tree** as Israel, **planted** in God’s **vineyard**, that is, the world. 15

God looked for **fruit on** the tree but He **found none**. So He said to the vinedresser (the Lord Jesus) that He had sought in vain for fruit from the tree **for three years**. The simplest interpretation of this refers it to the first three years of our Lord’s public ministry. The thought of the passage is that the fig tree had been given sufficient time to produce fruit, if it was ever going to do so. If no fruit appeared in three years, then it was reasonable to conclude that none would ever appear. 25

Because of its fruitlessness, God ordered to **cut it down**. It was only occupying **ground** that could be used more productively. 35

The vinedresser interceded for the fig tree, asking that it be given one more year. If at the end of that time, it was still fruitless, then He could **cut it down**. And that is what happened. It was after the fourth year had begun that Israel rejected and crucified the Lord Jesus. As a result, its capital was destroyed and the people scattered. 45

G. H. Lang expressed it thus: The Son of God knew the mind of His Father, the Owner of the vineyard, and that the dread order “Cut it down” had been issued; Israel had again exhausted the Divine forbearance. Neither a nation nor a person has reason to enjoy the care of God if not bringing forth the fruits of righteousness unto the glory and praise of God. Man exists for the honor and pleasure of the Creator: when he does not serve this just end why should not the sentence of death follow his sinful failure, and he be removed from his place of privilege? 55